

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

NUMBER 62

NOV-DEC 1993

Published by the Discussion Bulletin Committee, I.U.C.E.

Address all correspondence to
DISCUSSION BULLETIN, P.O. Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

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BULLETIN MATTERS

If all goes well, this and future issues of the DB will be easier to read. We have a different--if not new--copier that enables us to copy directly from the pasted up originals instead of having to make a reduced copy and then copying from that. In addition the copying itself is much crisper.

This issue begins with Robin Cox's article on reformism, sparked at least in part by an article by Ted Edge in DB60. Besides his comments on reformism, Robin Cox presents a view of the nature of socialist revolution rather at odds with the ideas most of us have on the subject. Next Curtis Price makes available an article from the Councilist publication Echanges on democracy, a subject which has prompted discussion in recent issues.

In another short article on democracy Ed Jahn sets me and other DB readers straight on what he regards as appropriate organizational democracy: the IWW model--which is remarkably similar, especially in
(Cont'd on p. 17)

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It serves as the financially and politically independent forum of a relatively unknown sector of political thought that places the great divide in the "left," not between anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism's statist leftwing of vanguardists and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. They are organized in small groups of syndicalists, communist anarchists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists. The perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism's wage, market, and money system as well as capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases.

In the DB the often antagonistic groups that make up this sector can debate and discuss the issues that divide them, gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities, and begin a process, we hope, of at least limited cooperation.

The pages of the DB are open to anyone in this political sector, the only limitation being that submissions be typewritten, single-spaced, and copier ready. We do no editing here. As to content, we assume that submissions will be relevant to the purpose of the DB and will avoid personal attacks.

Subscription Information

The Discussion Bulletin is published bimonthly. Prices below are in U.S. currency.

U.S.: Individual subscription \$3; Library \$5

Non-U.S.	Surface Mail	Individual sub	\$5; Library	\$10
	Air Mail	Individual sub	\$10; Library	\$15

Back Issues: Nos. 1-8 \$2 each, Nos. 9+ \$1 each plus postage.

Expirations: The last issue of your subscription is indicated by the number on your address label. When your sub expires, we highlight it to remind you.

Sample Copies: A sample copy is sent on request. We mail copies not used to fill subscriptions to people on our extended mailing list.

September 1993

For revolutionaries, the term "reformism" is a pejorative one. It carries the indictment of having compromised oneself with the system. There is a sound socialist critique that can, and ought to be, made of "reformism" but this has to be predicated on a rigorous definition of that term.

Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. What is presented as principled opposition to reformism may sometimes hide a muddled understanding of the dynamics of social change, a dogmatic puritanism that requires the baby to be thrown out with the bathwater. This cannot advance the cause of social revolution, only hinder it.

Ted Edge, having been a long standing member of the Socialist Party (of Great Britain) tells us that he left the Party partly because of its "creeping reformism". This claim will have a familiar ring to anyone acquainted with the history of the Socialist Party. Indeed, it is one that is currently being promoted by a small sect of disgruntled ex-members who once populated the Party's conservative wing. Whether the claim is a fair one, and Ted offers no real evidence to support it, readers can make up their own mind by perusing the Socialist Standard.

To someone unfamiliar with socialist politics such doctrinal debate might seem a trifle irrelevant. The world is rife with problems that urgently need to be addressed. Reformism has the positive connotation of alleviation, uplift and improvement - who could possibly oppose that?

But socialist opposition to reformism does not mean opposing improvement. That would be quite absurd. However, there is a school of thought on the Left which holds that for socialism to come onto the agenda presupposes a marked deterioration in the living conditions of workers. Ted Edge would appear to endorse such a view, and from his reference to the "Third World situation" one might deduce from this that he has in mind absolute, rather than simply relative, deterioration. Logically speaking, this should commit him to the proposition that any improvement in the condition of workers should be resisted - how else can one hasten the advent of socialism? And yet, as he makes clear, Ted supports the trade union struggle for "better wages and conditions".

This may not be an inconsistency providing one assumes that any anticipated deterioration in living standards will occur in spite of such struggle. But note what this implies. In contrast to Marxist view that "men make circumstances" as much as "circumstances make men", we are presented with an essentially fatalistic and economically determinist worldview in which a socialist revolution is seen as being contingent upon circumstances we must await rather than create, upon the

mysterious unfolding of History.

This view, though born of an understandable frustration at the lack of progress towards socialism, is nevertheless psychologically damaging to the cause; it is a prescription for passivity. Also, it is seriously to be doubted whether an absolute deterioration in material circumstances will in itself promote the growth of socialist consciousness on which a revolution depends. It could just as likely to result in the apathy of the socially atomised or, alternatively, the irrational authoritarianism of fascism.

In any case, whatever the effect that material circumstances may have in shaping our worldview we should not overstate it at the expense of other factors - such as culture, ideology or, indeed, the existence of an effective revolutionary organisation - which mediate our experiences of the world. Our material circumstances could improve but we could still feel increasing dissatisfied, alienated and insecure. What we might endure without complaint under conditions of extreme deprivation might irritate or outrage us when we have enough food in our belly and clothes on our back.

But to return to the point at issue: if socialists do not oppose improvement why then oppose reformism? The short answer to that is that reformism does not actually lead to real and lasting improvement; rather, it hinders it. How so? Because it takes for granted, and works entirely within, the economic framework of capitalism, a system which generates the very problems which reformists seek to address.

The fundamental problems that afflicted capitalist society one hundred years ago still manifest themselves today. They arise out of the very way capitalism operates as an economic system, based on the production of commodities for sale on a market with a view to profit. State-run capitalism or nationalisation does not alter this picture in any significant way; the great majority are still compelled to sell their working abilities to the capitalist minority for a wage or salary, the value of which must, of necessity, be less (usually much less) than the value of the goods and services they alone produce.

This surplus value - or more familiarly, profit - is the basis of the capitalists' wealth, part of which they consume themselves, part of which they (re)invest as capital. However, the latter presupposes some expectation of a return on the capital invested. Without that, investment dries up and production grinds to a halt. Moreover, competition between firms compels each to maximise their profits and this involves holding down, or "externalising" their costs.

From such interconnected pressures stem the problems that reformists attempt to tackle. Thus, the need for firms to make themselves more competitive by shedding "unnecessary" labour - so called economic rationalisation - results in increasing

unemployment. Thus, the temptation for firms to avoid as much of the cost burden of processing their wastes which might threaten their profit margins, results in pollution of the waterways and the atmosphere. And so on. Clearly such problems have to do with the way capitalism operates as an economic system and will not disappear until capitalism itself disappears.

Since capitalism is an economic system, it follows that the problems which concern reformists are essentially of an economic nature. Reformism can thus be defined as an approach which seeks to modify the economic behaviour of firms within, or ameliorate the economic conditions created by, capitalism in ways that, according to socialists, will always tend to go against the grain of capitalism. Reformism will therefore fail to achieve what it ostensibly sets out to achieve - though it might offer temporary benefits for some though usually at the expense of others. In capitalism, there is no such thing as a "free lunch"!

There are, for example, limits to the amount of subsidies that could keep afloat unprofitable industries, and thus reduce unemployment, since these affect the competitiveness of other industries which have to pay for them. Similarly, there are limits to how far capitalist firms can be compelled to internalise their environmental costs according to the "polluter pays" principle since, among other things, governments, who are expected to exert this pressure, rely on the profits of industry for their own revenue via taxation.

This brings us to another essential characteristic of reformism which has to do with the manner in which it seeks to bring about the desired changes i.e. through government legislation or action. Appealing to governments to solve our problems not only entrenches the power of governments and gives it legitimacy but also overlooks what is the primary function of government itself: to uphold and promote the interests of the capitalist minority. This may involve adjudicating between rival capitalists in a way that cannot totally satisfy all the parties concerned but, where the interests of the capitalists as a whole come into conflict with those of the great majority, governments will always, whatever their hue, side with the former.

In summary, then, reformism is essentially a political activity insofar as it involves pressure on governments to do certain things which have an essentially economic objective. Revolutionary activity, the propagation of socialist ideas, can also be construed as political insofar as it looks forward to the democratic capture of state power but with a radically different economic objective in mind - to end capitalism rather than reform it.

It might seem that reformist and revolutionary activity comprise the totality of political activity - at least, to those who consider that any activity that is not explicitly revolutionary must therefore be reformist - but this is not necessarily the case. There is a third category of political activity which is neither inherently

unemployment. Thus, the temptation for firms to avoid as much of the cost burden of processing their wastes which might threaten their profit margins, results in pollution of the waterways and the atmosphere. And so on. Clearly such problems have to do with the way capitalism operates as an economic system and will not disappear until capitalism itself disappears.

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reformist nor revolutionary but is undeniably political. These are what might be called consciousness-modifying activities.

Anti-racist protest, for example, (one could just as easily suggest, say, anti-sexism) does not essentially impinge upon the way capitalism operates as an economic system. The incidence of racism may to some extent be conditioned by economic circumstances but in opposing it one is not necessarily trying to reform capitalism, to circumvent its so called quasi-objective economic "laws" (more anon) which produce these circumstances; rather, one is trying to reform people's ideas, a particular pattern of social behaviour. Indeed, while anti-racism and anti-sexism may not be intrinsically revolutionary they are, along with other such aspects, indispensable preconditions of a socialist revolution; a working class that has succumbed to racism and sexism is not one that can unite for socialism.

Similarly, political reform almost by definition is not reformist - at least in the sense proposed here of being economically oriented. Indeed, just as with anti-racism and anti-sexism, there is a powerful case for supporting political reforms: in the absence of a relatively democratic climate, socialist ideas would be much harder to propagate. We would be negligent in our duty as socialists not to help promote such a climate.

The fact that those supporting political democratisation in Eastern Europe happened to be very largely pro-capitalist is no reason why socialists should not do likewise. The great majority of trade unionists today are similarly pro-capitalist but would Ted suggest that socialists should not therefore engage in trade union activity? Of course not. While opposing political reforms because, as in Eastern Europe, some capitalists might benefit from them, he nevertheless recognises that valuable gains were made in the form of "multiparty democracy and trade union rights". Does he want to deny the socialist movement these "valuable gains"?

This brings us to our fourth category. Whereas in the political realm we make choices about the future kind of society we want, and for most workers to date this means capitalism - even though this is not in their, but the capitalists', interests - in the non-political realm of the industrial struggle we have no choice about which side we are on in the class struggle. Ted recognises this well enough when he points out that it is "possible for individuals to be effective trade unionists and yet consistently support capitalist political parties, hence taking opposite sides in the two bits of the class struggle". Yet curiously he characterises trade union activity as reformist when he refers to "reformist (including trade union) activity.

Insofar as workers want to improve their economic lot within capitalism it is through trade union activity that this should be done - not reformism. Rather than appeal to governments to tinker with the system, workers should use their industrial muscle to force the pace of improvement. Indeed, it can be argued that this is by far the most important factor in bringing about improvement in the economic conditions of the working class.

But even so, the industrial struggle is essentially a defensive one. Its effectiveness will depend upon the economic conditions prevailing - in the face of economic recession there is little that workers can do - but also on the organisation of trade unions themselves. Greater democratisation within the unions and less reliance on "leaders" will promote more participation and, hence, more effective action. Indeed, the growth of the socialist movement and the deepening of democratic values it will foster will have just such an outcome.

Beyond trade unionism and the industrial struggle, however, there is a fifth category of activity which is similarly located in the economic realm. For want of a better term, I have called it abstentionism. It consists of all those activities that are carried on outside the capitalist economy and its cash nexus.

This is already a substantial sector though, ironically, its significance has been largely overlooked by non-market socialists whose focus has been on the formal economy. According to one estimate (referring to the UK), the so-called "grey economy" of household and voluntary community activity accounts for "51 per cent of all labour hours, compared with 46 per cent in the formal economy and 3 per cent in the black economy" (*New Society* 8 November 1985).

It is inconceivable that the growth of the socialist movement and the dissemination of ideas about a non-market alternative will not have a commensurate effect on the size and scope of this sector. By the time the movement was a substantial minority, it would consist of millions of individuals. They would want to put into effect, as far as was practically possible, the principles of socialist system in the economic domain. In short, they would want to withdraw from the market system in every way they could.

But how practically possible is this? Many socialists would agree that the impact of a growing socialist movement in capitalist society would be considerable. It would permeate our culture, our personal relationships, our social institutions. But there, they say, it would stop; it could go no further because the "iron laws of capitalism" would prevent it from penetrating the economic base. Ted is evidently one of those who thinks in this vein since he is critical of trade unionists who believe capitalism is "made of pleistocene".

This is economic determinism. It sees the economic base as allegedly immune to those influences to which the social superstructure will succumb. But actually, the so called economic laws of capitalism only effectively function because, and to the extent that, the population support capitalism. This is why reformism must fail: because it presupposes support for capitalism. It thus legitimises the way the system operates against which the hopes of reformists are dashed.

It might be helpful to visualise capitalism as a smaller circle within the larger

circle that is human society. Outside the smaller circle there are other circles; remnants of older social systems such as feudalism, chattel slavery (even today), and "primitive" communistic societies. The capitalist system may be the dominant organising force in society today but is far from being the only one. Even in the heartlands of world capitalism there are, as we have seen, an enormous range of useful activities, which are not capitalistic in their orientation, do not involve waged employment, and do not take the commodity form.

Just as capitalism developed organically within the interstices of feudalism as an alternative to the prevailing order, so a future society will develop in like fashion in the interstices of the present capitalist-dominated society. Socialism will be prefigured in the form of "socialistic" patterns of cooperation. These will not constitute little "islands of socialism" since it would not be possible to totally disengage from the market until the political revolution has been accomplished. However, gradually and incrementally, communities, cooperatives and individuals will be able to alter the nature of the economic linkages that exist between them from market-oriented relationships to largely those of reciprocity - what is called the "gift economy". In short, the circle of capitalist influence within present day society will progressively contract.

All this presupposes the growth of socialist consciousness and hence the will on the part of all concerned to render each other mutual support. Without that consciousness, without that willingness to cooperate such a scenario will not be possible. But the existence of a viable alternative economy will, in turn, help the spread of socialist ideas through the power of practical example. It will galvanise the socialist movement to complete the task of social transformation through political action.

Abstentionism in the economic realm will thus reinforce revolutionary activity in the political realm, and vice versa. In abstentionism, we therefore have the final piece in our socialist jigsaw. While reformism upholds the status quo, and revolutionary activity seeks its overthrow, the influence of consciousness-modifying, trade union and abstentionist activities is perhaps more neutral or indirect. However, such activities can aid the revolutionary transformation from capitalism to socialism if only we allow ourselves to see not just their limitations but also their potential. To dismiss them as "reformist" is to commit ourselves to the solitude of the political wilderness.

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(This article originally appeared in "Echanges" #61 as a response to coverage of the French Railway strikes of 1986-87 (1). While many of the references are very specific to the strike, a larger and more interesting (if controversial) critique is made here on the nature and content of direct democracy itself. In retyping this from the original article, some of the grammar has been tightened up, a few phrases translated in Americanized English, typos corrected and footnotes added to better explain points probably unfamiliar to U.S. readers; all without altering any of the writer's basic points.--CP):

IS DIRECT DEMOCRACY REALLY POSSIBLE?

"Thirteen years ago, the monthly paper of the Italian Socialist Party "Mondo Operaio" launched a discussion on the problem of the State among socialists, communists and leftists in publishing an article from Professor Norberto Bobbio, a top figure among the Italian political culture, asking the question: "What are the alternatives to representative democracy?" (2). After a quick examination of left and Right arguments against democracy in general and the representative system in particular, Bobbio concludes that a valid and convincing alternative does not exist and that even those wanting radical emancipation beyond emancipation should accept and defend representative democracy as a necessary preparatory step.

On this last point everybody agreed with the exception of two or three opposing voices: We have to be resolutely *for* representative democracy *and against* direct democracy.

We are used to seeing leftist movements and left intellectuals moving in the same system of references but adopting a reverse position: We have to be resolutely *for* direct democracy *and against* representative democracy. It was already the choice in 1968 and it is still the choice of the leftist movement today, as we can see when considering the comments in the alternative press about the events in November/December and January 86/87 in France (the student struggles and SNCF strike). No other position could be seen. What is remarkable in the most recent comments is the certainty clearly expressed by some of them that there is a real historical tendency towards direct democracy in working class struggles. I will try shortly to explain why I think that 'direct democracy' has nothing to do with the self-emancipation of the working class (except for the fact that aborted pseudo direct democracy experiences ease the self-emancipation process), that it

never existed and that it was impossible to practice it in the post-war period.

1. Representative democracy does not exist and never existed, neither in work places nor in any other place, either in France or elsewhere. Among the structures built to limit freedom, parliaments could be considered as the most important. On one hand, the sovereignty of those supposed to be represented is pure fiction. The electorate is not a collection of equals and free men, but a heterogeneous collection of exploiters and exploited, of rulers and ruled, of assisted and assistants. When 'sovereign people' is a fiction, then the delegation of this people's representation are fictions too. On the other hand, it is exactly from this fiction that parliament draws its imaginary character of a democratic institution, helping parliamentary decisions to appear as legal and right decisions, and mainly to make these decisions compulsory for everybody. In this process called constitution-alization of the non-constitutional, it is not important to know that parliamentary decisions are taken against the will of the people's majority or against its more elementary needs. Once the legislative act is voted in, the popular will has to find its limit, especially the limit of all forms of resistance within the law. That executive and judiciary power are there to control is to be expected. What remains of democracy is the regular repetition of pseudo-democratic rituals: Elections of representatives are widely spread, in factories and offices, in schools and universities, in Social Security, in parties and unions, in associations, etc... In the electoral battles between several groups or individuals, reports of responsible people, in the broadcasting of debates on radio and TV, etc...

2. So why fight against a representative democracy which does not exist and is impossible in class societies? It's the secret of the leftist movement. What exists, is perfectly possible and a basic need in a capitalist system is:

a. The ideology of 'representative democracy' as we know it well: Popular sovereignty, popular representation through elected MP's division of powers, the legal state, the principle of legality, the public character of state affairs, equal and general taxation, human citizen rights, to quote only the most fundamental ones.

b. Non-democratic state power whose only task is the mediation between two antagonistic classes to maintain the capitalist system's

stability (mediation is something completely different from state neutrality or autonomy, both impossible to exist); the instruments of this power are schools and universities, army, police, mass media, justice, social security, etc.

Linked with the rules of a 'representative democracy', even the very existence of the working class is characterized by illegality. Its organization is already given by its situation as a class, the unity of which is being always reinforced by the other classes' activity; its' consciousness is more clearly expressed through its' collective actions against the capitalist class about the rate of profit which is the nervous system of the capitalist system. Nobody has a choice not to participate (except by suicide) in this daily struggle and a separation between economical and political struggle is impossible. Struggle or vote is a non-existent alternative for the working class: A worker can vote when he participates in the political or union elections, but he votes too when he struggles. At the level of state power (and of the unions too), this vote through struggle has almost destroyed all possibility of mediation between classes: Rejection of all representation, contempt of legality, blockage of state administration, crumbling of state finances; splits of employees inside the state apparatus are the most significant aspects of evidence. More and more, the logic of mediation is replaced by the logic of confrontation and antagonism.

3. Now the \$100,000 dollar question: What is the difference between direct democracy and representative democracy? Wait a minute before repeating your answer, which was wrong. Correct answer: Practically nothing even if we take the most perfect situation - general assembly of all concerned workers, regular meetings every day, unanimous votes, executive committee with members dismissible at the moment, regular and compulsory reports, duties rotated, etc.

A. Both those advocating direct democracy and representative democracy express the same need to build a "political organization" outside the organization already existing through class antagonism, an organization to discuss, to present alternative solutions, to decide together alternative solutions, to decide together strategy and tactics (a separation between struggle and discussion, between vote and struggle). It is nothing other than intellectual contempt; often too, complete ignorance of the daily

struggle around the rate of profit and over-estimation of the value of discussion and 'consciousness' as a purely intellectual process.

B. Neither regular elections in 'representative democracy', nor general workers' assemblies all over France, even if they were taking place every day, would change anything even marginally in the capitalist system of exploitation. On the contrary, facts about exploitation, inequalities, sectional interests, uneven access to education and information, etc., will unavoidably determine the functioning and the structures of general assemblies. It is not by chance if most of the time the 'militants' are the only ones to speak in the assemblies, if manipulations about the 'power of speaking' can take place, if practically only those 'militants' outside the strike are the members of the strike committees, if local, regional or national coordinating committees have to be 'organized' by Bonapartist people, if strike committees or national coordinations self proclaim they are representative of thousands of workers. It is the normal functioning and inevitability of 'direct democracy', of rank and file democracy, of assemblyist democracy or of any other pompous concept invented to dissimulate the actual character of these institutions. 'Representative democracy', as well as 'direct democracy' can only reproduce the inequality of the capitalist system.

C. We are told that general assemblies are set up to provide unity beyond the unions and political divisions, but in fact, this unity is a pure fiction, as fictitious as the 'people of France', which is the basis of 'representative democracy'. When a general assembly is set up it is said that the workers are not yet organized, a naive ignorance of the primary organization built through class antagonism, workers are considered as individuals without an organization, as an amorphous mass completely atomized. So everybody is considered as equal, free and agreed and there is unity, (because if all the participants see themselves as equals it is 'normal' the number of heads is counted for decisions). The utmost degree of unity is when unionists and non-unionists together all raise their hands voting yes or no. Fortunately, this magic transformation of a proletarian identity (basis of daily struggle) into an assemblyist 'autonomous' identity of militant workers inside and for their secondary organization in the defense of an imaginary unity is doomed to fail.

D. Defenders of 'representative democracy' as well as defenders of 'direct democracy', insist on the need for delegating power (separation between electing and elected, between rank and file and delegates). Nobody can be surprised that the relationship between the general assembly and the strike committee is reversed. This reversal is not the sign of a 'bad' functioning of direct democracy but a sign of its normal functioning and all the pseudo-democratic rituals inherent in the assemblist democracy cannot at all prevent these things from happening.

4. We have to draw the conclusion that 'direct democracy' does not exist and has never existed. 'Representative democracy' and 'direct democracy' are not democracy as a lie and democracy as a reality, but only two different techniques of capitalist mediation and integration. Why then the fight for 'direct democracy'? Another secret of the leftist movement. For all the people interest in real experiences of 'direct democracy', in the sense of social practice, there are a lot of situations to study, mainly in the post-war period in France, as in England, in Germany as in the USA, in Italy as in Spain. Even if we can't say that these experiences have been sufficiently studied (why look at the reality when we can dream?), we see that the working class in the most advanced capitalist countries has left direct democracy behind. This is true for French railway workers too. This fortress of the section (and also the unitary one) was fighting against integration through 'direct democracy' as well as through 'representative democracy', even if only for a week or two, a minority of workers overlooked this historical tendency of class struggle in France (and elsewhere). We can only regret one thing: Apart from this inflated exaltation of direct democracy in the SNCF strike, we have looked in vain for something on the daily struggle of the French railway workers in the pages of "Rouge", "Mais Encore", "Lutte Ouvriere", "Courant Alternatif", "Les Cahiers du Doute", "Liasons" and "Echanges" as well as developments of class struggle in this direction when they are not by chance going on wildcat strikes every ten or twenty years. All these papers were silent on this important aspect of class struggle.

T.S., 1988

(1) Two different accounts of this strike available in English are: "France Goes Off the Rails" (BM Blob) and "France-Winter 86-87 An Attempt at Autonomous Organization: The Railway Strike" (Echanges)

(2) Bobbio's articles can be found in English in his book: "The Future of Democracy" (University of Minnesota Press).

(3) French Trotskyist, anarchist, and ultra-left press.

Democracy: A Unique Misunderstanding

Frank Girard, in Discussion Bulletin # 60, p.25-26, says that my "unique understanding" of democracy calls for "a single mass assembly where direct democracy could prevail". No, it does not.

Democracy = Majority Rule + Individual Rights

Majority Rule means that all important decisions are made by majority vote. "Important decisions" include the election of officers, decisions about the organization's money, and the setting of organization policies. Individual rights include the right to know what the issues are, to form your own opinions, and to disagree with your "leaders". These rights are essential, because without them the majority cannot know what it is voting for.

You don't have to get everybody together in one place to take a vote. You can do it:

- (1) in local meetings, or
- (2) by mail.

Either way you have some dangers of cheating, but there are well established methods for reducing these dangers to a minimum.

Mail ballots as used by the IWW are a good example of how it can be done. The IWW is not perfect, but most of its important decisions are made by its members. It also protects individual rights -- though here again its record is not perfect. But even though it could be improved, the IWW shows that democracy can be practiced in the real world.

The kind of "direct democracy" that Frank seems to think I believe in is actually not democratic at all. The typical "mass assembly" produces tremendous confusion and miscommunication, which prevent people from understanding what they are voting for. Most often, it is really just a cheering section for some in-group. I don't know how Frank managed to read "mass assembly" into my writings on this subject. I'll just have to call it a unique misunderstanding.

Ed Jahn / 4409 Oak Creek Court #501 / Fairfax VA 22033

Max Anger, in his letter to *DB* 61, taking up the cudgels on behalf of Wildcat, has either misunderstood the subject of the previous discussion (democracy *in the revolutionary movement*) or has intentionally changed the subject to his own area of special interest (as we know from his earlier writings, including his modestly titled "Max Anger's Song") : terror, executions, or, as he says here, "murder . . . on a vast scale." The series of rhetorical questions in his first paragraph is an attempt to evade the critique of *Wildcat's vanguardism* . Nothing I have written has addressed the question of the level of revolutionary violence necessary to create a communist world. My criticisms have been focused exclusively on the implications of Wildcat's anti-democratic stance *within the revolutionary movement itself* . I went so far as to speculate that Wildcat's preference for dictatorial control over the revolutionary working class is motivated by hatred and revenge. Max Anger's response would seem to strengthen that inference; the blood fairly drips from his word-processor. He is not a member of the London group, but is a close North American associate of them, and until Wildcat themselves correct us, I think it is safe to assume he accurately, if more crudely, expresses their viewpoint.

To answer his hard-hitting question directly, No, I am not opposed to the use of violence in the class war. I *am* opposed to the use of violence, despotism and injustice by *vanguards* against the interests and will of the revolutionary working *class* , which is what Wildcat is attempting to promote with their new and improved "anti-democratic communism". In their articles on the Bolshevik Counter Revolution and in their reply to my letter to them, they consistently single out for praise dictatorial and bloody actions (armed insurrection during the July Days in Petrograd, execution of the imprisoned "highly motivated pigs" in Iraq), taken by *self-appointed vanguards* against the will of revolutionary workers, organized in councils, where decisions had been reached collectively and democratically. According to Wildcat the *wrong* decisions had been or might have been made by these councils; democratic, collective decision-making is error-prone! The whole process must therefore be jettisoned. Anyway, why even bother when *only Wildcat know* what is the right action to take?

In an earlier incarnation, Wildcat promulgated a different line. It is important to note how their ideas have changed since they published their pamphlet "Capitalism and its Revolutionary Destruction" in 1986 (reprinted in *DB* #43 and 44). Referring to an early phase of the revolution in which workers meet in workplace and neighborhood assemblies, they said

These assemblies will elect delegates to regional and inter/national [sic] assemblies to coordinate the struggle. These delegates will be chosen, mandatable, revokable and dismissible by the meetings which elected them.

Unlike capitalist democracy which is based on the passivity of the individual, this working-class *self-organisation* is meaningless unless it is based on mass struggle and the active participation of the vast majority of those involved. It reflects the collective fighting spirit of the working class. . . .

. . . [S]uch forms of organization, whilst not guaranteeing the development of the class struggle towards communism, provide the *best framework* for an active and militant class to control and extend its struggle.

As part of the militant class the most clear-sighted minorities will be active in pushing the struggle forward. Inevitably in the early stages there will be still a conflict between the majority views

16 of the assemblies and these minorities, who must maintain their independent existence and activity. But eventually if revolution is to succeed, the great mass of the working class must become conscious communists. [emphases in original]

As their letter of March 16, 1992 makes clear, Wildcat has abandoned the emphasis on assemblies, mass struggle and self-organization of the class. A major split in the group occurred after the pamphlet was published, and the remaining or new members of Wildcat take a very different line. They now emphasize their intention to act dictatorially whenever they disagree with the decisions of the majority in councils and assemblies. *Wildcat recognize no obligation to cooperate with any social collectivity*, not even that of the revolutionary workers organized in their own revolutionary organizations to advance the revolution. Wildcat insist on the right to do whatever they want whenever they want. They call this theoretical breakthrough "anti-democratic communism", and promote it tirelessly in their journal. But they try to obscure the fact that this "total freedom" for them means no freedom for anyone who disagrees with them.

Thus Max Anger's letter, which castigates Jack Straw and me as "apostles of timidity" who "want the most far-going social revolution of all time . . . to transpire without anybody having to get their hands dirty" is a crude attempt to shift the discussion away from the critique of Wildcat we have made. We are not talking about revolutionary violence against the capitalist class and its servants, but about the counter-revolutionary violence that hides behind the term "anti-democratic communism". Wildcat and Max Anger have no intention of participating as equals in the movement of the working class toward communism; they must be *leaders*. Their ideas *must* prevail. They read Bismarck, Clausewitz and Machiavelli to learn the appropriate strategies and tactics to build dictatorship, not communism.

Max Anger claims there was nothing inherently wrong with the use of terror by the Bolsheviks, but that their application of it was counter revolutionary because they used it against revolutionary proletarians. The implication is that he and Wildcat would use it only against the right victims, whom he lists in the penultimate paragraph: "other proletarians and counterrevolutionary working class formations, social democrat or Bolshevik, C.N.T. or Solidarinosc. . .". Wow! Add to these members of the working class all the former cops, soldiers, and other "non-proletarians" (students, teachers, social workers, secretaries, library employees, writers, artists, peasants), all of whom have to be eliminated because of the possibility that they might become counter revolutionaries after the revolution (this was the reason the "highly motivated pigs" in Iraq had to be executed). All these millions of dead people, and still not a single dead capitalist! I must admit, the cold grim reality of revolution as envisioned by Max Anger and Wildcat, the "murder . . . on a vast scale", really has been foreign to my own vision of the revolutionary process, and to the world created by it. Foolishly I have imagined that some of my friends and family would still be alive, that they would all want to join me in the movement toward it; that even I, a former student, a former teacher, a former writer, would be forgiven my past transgressions against the revolution and be permitted to discover my humanity in a communist society. What a self-deluding fool, what a timid utopian idiot, I have been and must therefor for all time be! Until I am eliminated.

Max Anger makes a number of factual errors and misrepresentations in his sanguinary letter. He claims that I have nowhere referred to even a single example of a successful democratic revolutionary process. He is wrong. I

singled out the soviet of Kronstadt in 1917 as just such an example, and pointed out that even Wildcat had reluctantly to admit that the democratic debates there "were real debates . . . in which the deputies, even to some extent the Bolshevik ones, decided the issues on their merits, rather than on the basis of the party line." The democratic achievements of the revolutionary working class at Kronstadt, until interfered with by the Bolsheviks in 1918, are one of the most inspiring historical examples of self-management by the working class. The anti-democratic Bolsheviks, of course, found it necessary to exterminate the Kronstadters.

Max Anger totally distorts the true import of the Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine from 1918 to 1921. It was not a proletarian movement, but a peasant insurgency against all forms of dictatorship, whether imposed by the Germans, the Whites, the Ukrainian nationalist regime of Petliura, or the Bolsheviks. When Makhno's army liberated a village from governmental control, the inhabitants were given absolutely free rein to determine their own preferred form of democratic self-management. At no time did Makhno dictate to the peasantry the forms or the content of their revolutionary process. Makhno's army did not expropriate landowners, the liberated peasants did. His actions were not substitutionist, as Max Anger notes, precisely because he had the support of the vast majority of the peasants in the countryside. He was their military leader, empowered by their support and nothing else, to liberate their country from dictatorship. He was most certainly a democratic revolutionary. Nor is he remembered for the huge number of people he found it necessary to eliminate.

Yours in solidarity,

Will Guest

(Cont'd from p. 2)

its referendum provisions, to that of the SLP. I would guess, though, that Ed would agree that a national officer with authoritarian inclinations would find room to "guide" policy as s/he wished in either organization

Will Guest's letter continues a discussion on revolutionary democracy that began with DB's publication of an article by Wildcat. Next Monroe Prussack criticizes Alan Sanderson's comments on the Socialist Party (of Great Britain) for revolution. And Adam Buick of the Socialist Party writes suggesting that the views of that organization of DeLeonists are not seriously at odds. The World Socialists of the Socialist Party do not reject out of hand the idea of an economic organization of a socialist society.

Next Earl Gilman calls for a level of ecumenism is the DB that will test the ideological tolerance of many of us. Laurens Otter comments on the debate we reprinted from Mike Lepore's electronic journal Organized Thoughts. Then Ken Kelly responds to Ben Perry's characterization of some SLP members as "hierarchs," and Paul Buhle calls for assistance, especially from DeLeonists, in a projected Pictorial History of American Radicalism. On the next page Ben Perry announces a new labor history publication devoted to "the Socialist Labor Party and its offshoots."

(Cont'd on p. 31)

Dear readers,

In D.B.61 there was an article by Alar Sanderson on how to dispose of the capitalist class. The task he offers to believers in DeLeons program is to educate people to win a majority at the ballot box and in all industries so as to be able to take over society and continue production. Karl Marx whom Mr. Sanderson accepts made it sound easier when he revealed that the continuous improvement of the means of production makes social progress and the revolution to Socialism inevitable. It is not the enlightened ego of a collection of individuals that is necessary for a socialist revolution but a universal acceptance of the Socialist doctrine because of a general belief that we are ready for it. To take the Bible for a comparason it is necessary for the working class to continue to build the Tower of Babel even if social systems must change to make continued production possible. To advocate Socialism while capitalist production is forging ahead with more advanced technology and spreading into more areas of the world is to spread confusion that in a like manner doomed the Tower of Babel.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is unlikely to accept Mr. Sandersons criticism and adopt DeLeons program for social revolution if for no other reason than it wants to continue to get aid from wealthy contributors and from people who fear losing what they have. People are not yet ready to gamble that Socialism can provide each of us much more than we have now. However, if Mr. Sanderson succeeds in attracting some people to his cause, it will weaken opposition to the Tory party and make victory for them more likely. People on the political right as well as those on the left support capitalism and ~~and~~ get satisfaction in trashing out their differances to get more involved in the capitalist system. So long as the capitalist system satisfies most people a Marxist political party is superfluous. Karl Marx and Frederick Engles did not belong to a political party but consistently spread the best Socialist education. We must replace those universal teachers with like minded people who believe that the masses will fulfill their historic mission when capitalism suddenly colapses. Political action when victory is unlikely tends to make us take an attitude of defeat when we should reflect high hopes for a bright future. The capitalist system is destined to lead to a better system because it fights or faught reactionary systems like Nazi Germany- Imperial Japan the Russian Empire and is now in opposition to Iranian fanaticalism and North Korean despotism. If the civilized world can not go backward and will not remain the same in this economic crisis we are in; it can only go ahead to a better system we hope and pray.

Fraternally yours,

Thomas Russell

Alan Sanderson misrepresents the SPGB's case in the article you reprinted in DB81.

We do not say, or imagine, that Socialism could result merely from the vote of a parliamentary majority. On the contrary, what we say is that Socialism can only be established by the working class, organised both politically and economically outside Parliament.

The working class needs to organise politically in order to win control of political power, so as to take it out of the hands of the capitalist class and prevent it being used to impede the establishment of Socialism. But organising politically involves more than just voting for a Socialist delegate in a parliamentary election. Primarily, it involves organising into a mass, democratic, socialist movement outside Parliament. The sending of delegates to Parliament, and the subsequent vote by the Socialist parliamentary majority to outlaw capitalist ownership and control of the means of production, is merely a reflexion of this democratic, socialist self-organisation of the workers outside Parliament. It is this mass desire for Socialism, and this mass determination to achieve it, not the existence of a Socialist parliamentary majority as such, that is the key factor in the establishment of Socialism.

The working class needs to organise economically in order to take over and keep production going during and immediately after the capture of political power. The desire and determination on the part of a majority of workers to achieve Socialism will find expression in their economic organisations (trade unions, labor unions, etc) as well as on the political field. Just as they will form a mass socialist political party, so their existing economic organisations will be transformed from the bureaucratic job trusts they are today into organisations ready to participate in the establishment of Socialism by taking over and maintaining production once capitalist control over the means of production has been removed by political action. Later, they will merge into the general structure of democratic administration of socialist society.

The difference between the SPGB position and the classic SLP position is, if you like, that, while the both of us urge the need for the working class to organise politically and economically for Socialism, they consider the economic organisation to be the more important. We take the opposite view: that, given the fact that capitalist control of industry derives from their control of political power, it is political organisation that is the more important.

--Adam Buick, 40 Granville Gardens, London W5 3PA. GB.

Dear comrades,

I think there is always a danger that we develop a symbiotic relationship to the old organizations of the Left, when we have to develop a new revolutionary movement in the U.S. Whether it is the S.L.P. or ex-Spartacists who can not shake off their "Spartacism", revolutionaries carry a lot of old baggage on their backs.

I'm not suggesting we should throw out the great thinkers of Marxism. But I think it's time Marxists studied Kropotkin, DeLeonists studied Lenin (also vise versa) because we have ghettoized our knowledge. Also (I know it's the ultimate heresy) Marxists can learn from "liberation theology."

Whether it was the S.L.P. or the S.W.P. (together with thousands of splits) there has been a failure to commit ourselves to democracy in daily practice. Supposedly, socialist democracy, we told the workers, will take place after the revolution. Meantime, we have imitated the capitalists and acted like pigs towards each other. Why should workers really trust us when we promise real democracy some day?

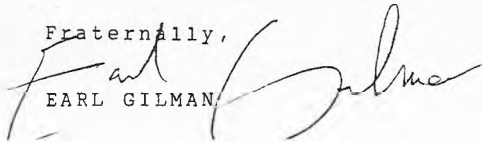
I'm not convinced that anarchists exemplify democracy either, whether through completely eliminating the decision making process so that everybody does their own thing or through consensus decisions which ultimately suppress minorities.

In the United States revolutionary tradition has been erased.

I think we can learn from the revolutionary traditions of other countries. For example, the experience of "cordones industriales" in Chile before 1973, the "cabildos" and Peoples Assembly in Bolivia, the massive self-help and Peoples School movement taking place today in Peru.

We have many tiny "revolutionary parties" in the U.S., but there is a lack of involvement in daily struggles. Distributing leaflets to workers telling them how good socialism will be is a terrible educational method. We have to show how they can partially liberate their lives now if they struggle against their boss or their landlord...or even an oppressive husband. We have to help them overcome their demoralization which means we have to learn and listen from them and not just preach to them.

Fraternally,


EARL GILMAN

Lepore/Szalai/Elbert by Laurens Otter

Except for the matter of abstention or otherwise from parliamentary elections, the Lepore/Szalai/Elbert debate hits on the most basic issues for D.B. readers; ones not confined to the debate between Spugubs & De Leonists, since the distinction between an industrial strategy & a "political" one is mirrored in the debate between syndicalists & Malatestans.

Anarchists too (both syndicalist & communist) are divided as to how much support/involvement on the part of the majority is necessary before revolution can finally be made. (Since we measure support not just in terms of how many people are prepared to put their x one way or another on a voting slip, it might be that anarchist debate would concentrate on other crucial figures than the 51% or 80% so far instanced, but *mutatis mutandis* there is similar debate; & I write this in the knowledge that anarchists too have not answered the questions satisfactorily.)

So far all your participants have assumed that the growth of socialist consciousness will be constant, unilinear & unidimensional. (This would seem to be a remarkably undialectic assumption for Marxists to make. May I suggest that growth is more likely to come in a series of waves, perhaps each flow will go further than the last, but there will be ebbs in between.) All seem agreed that such growth will certainly take decades & possibly centuries to pass from the 51% to the 80% mark.

Equally none of the participants have touched on the control of the Capitalist Press, the role played by capitalist domination of the education system, (indeed the libraries, advertising, & an hundred other ways to shape opinion,) in enlisting workers into support for capitalist institutions; nor has there been any mention of the "Secret State", the way that through dirty tricks governmental bodies can distort information, [c.f. Spycatcher,] & influence opinion.

There is another problem that those who believe in the vote must face. I don't know enough about the Canadian Constitution; in Britain no government has ever polled 51% of all votes, Thatcher with 42% of votes cast. (something round 30% abstentions,) had a majority of about 100 seats in Parliament. The U.S. system is such that only about 70% of those eligible to register do, & so, Presidential polls as far as I can gather seldom attract 50% of the real electorate; 26% of the population is therefore enough to win.

So long before the SPGB or SLPUS get even the 51% discussed they will have been elected to be the majority (probably overwhelming majority) in parliament &/or to Presidential office. Those who insist that 80% is necessary before there is a socialist transition have to envisage a situation where socialists are (whether constantly or frequently) so elected, for decades (possibly centuries,) during which they will not feel they have a mandate to make a socialist revolution.

What will they do? Some De Leonists would say abstain until such time as they have the overwhelming majority necessary. That means leaving power in the hands of a minority, by definition only an anti-democratic minority would agree to exercise such power, which could open up all sorts of dangers. The Spugubs say that its members will vote on bourgeois issues on their merits, which means that a government can only be formed by those members of the parliamentary minority who could expect the SPGB to vote for (or at least abstain on) their measures - as meritorious capitalist measures. - [the SPGB would not approve an anarchist abolition of government by direct action.]

Alright the SPGB would keep its hands clean, it wouldn't form the de iure government, but as it would have an absolute veto on all governmental actions & decrees, it would be the de facto one. The party would then have to choose what it did about M.I.5 etc., the capitalist Press, the educational system,...

P.S. to Lepore debate

During the late Forties - when I first came in contact with both the SPGB & the SLP - one of the standard debates both parties had with Leninists was when the latter, pointing to the recent experience of fascism, used to enquire as to how "Impossibilists" would resist similar movements, which, abolishing democracy, made impossible the aim of getting a socialist majority elected by parliamentary means.

The SP/SLP answer (which used, in the light of the fascist experience, to seem somewhat inadequate,) was that "it was absurd to suggest that the working class would allow the abolition of democracy, trade union rights, etc., which would mean abandoning the gains made by the class over several hundred years."

That argument was however, in effect, supplemented:

the SLP published a pamphlet on resistance to fascism that argued - I believe rightly that the real way to smash it was to mobilize workers in a socialist industrial union & use the social general strike;

the only trouble with this, was that the SLP had long before wound up the WIU, refused to have anything to do with any existing industrial union movement, would not have supported the formation of an OBU on anti-fascist grounds & opposed all strikes that took place;

in the case of the SPGB, reference was made to the party's position on voting in parliament for capitalist measures "according to their merits," - by implication they would also (as they saw necessary,) join in resistance on the streets to the coming of fascism;

the trouble with this implied argument was the party's position on Spain, & its objections to those like Cotton who had held that it was part & parcel of the SPGB's case that at times democracy had to be defended, & that the party would need to decide just to what degree it could work with reformists to do this.

The SP & SLP got away with the argument largely because fascism was anyway overthrown by other sections of the capitalists; & because though much of the Left had done more to oppose the establishment of fascism; no section of it had come out of the experience without some major failure &/or outright betrayal to its discredit.

But in this century we have seen two world wars, where massive sectors of the working class were slaughtered, & where the capitalists - by & large successfully - got away with major inroads into workers' rights; we have had the experience of fascism; we have had the Cold War, [in which "deterrence" was supposed to keep the peace, but in which there were in fact more (& more destructive) wars in the world than had ever been seen before.] & this was used to limit wages, to curtail civil liberties on both sides of the Iron Curtain; we have seen the Reagan-Thatcher "Monetarist" era, where preaching "liberty" the capitalists made wholesale assaults on trade unionism & the level of workers' pay & conditions.

Is it true that the working class is sufficiently immune to capitalist propaganda, (specifically capitalist nationalist & militaristic propaganda,) that it will not allow the gains of centuries to be set aside? I suggest there is a

prime facie case for saying it is not; & that those who think it is true, need to substantiate their argument. But if it is not true then both the SP & the SLP need to spell out other parts of their case which would take account of this.

No doubt a "tu quoque" is valid; but there is already open debate amongst anarchists, we acknowledge the fact that we did not stop Franco, that in the effort so to do, our Spanish comrades made impermissible compromises; [though the widely known Trotskyist condemnation of this fails because it is based on the false assumption that whatever the workers did, Stalin would, however halfheartedly, support them against Hitler. The SP & SLP need similar debate.

Dear DB,

I want to make one comment about Ben Perry's letter in DB #61. Those SLP members he calls "hierarchs," I would classify as "Georges." When everyone else says, "let George do it," these are the "Georges" who actually do the work of trying to emancipate the working class from economic slavery. People like Ed Jahn and Ed Wizek were expelled because they were interfering in the work of the "Georges." It takes a lot more time to refute lies and distortions than it does to dream them up in the first place. The only people who have been expelled from the SLP are those who have proved themselves to be enemies of the party and its principles, also the working class.

Ben Perry calls SLP members "hierarchs." I call them "Georges." Future history will recall them as "great emancipators of the working class."

Ken Kelly
HCR 32, Box 1011
Pahrump, NV 89041

Dear DB Folks,

I regret my failure earlier to get in touch with you about a project of probable mutual interest, a PICTORIAL HISTORY OF AMERICAN RADICALISM that I'm doing, with retired museum director Edmund Sullivan, for a small publisher (no big one would take the chance on a many-pictures book without a subsidy). I'd very much like the assistance of the DB network for DeLeonist (and other) photos, cartoons, objects (everything but campaign pins, which we have aplenty), posters, etc. Deadline is around the end of the year, which may be a bit too soon for your next issue, but pass the word if you will.

thanks, here's a \$fiver contribution.

all best,

Paul Bunle

363 Morris Ave
Providence RI 02906

Number One

Winter, 1984

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SOCIAL
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Note: DB received the document below from Canada. The covering note said that it was written by Alfredo Bonanno and translated by Jean Weir. We are publishing it in order to present another aspect of revolutionary socialism to readers, not because we agree with the ideas it presents. Besides the Italian address given at the end of the document, interested readers can write to

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ANTIAUTHORITARIAN INSURRECTIONALIST INTERNATIONAL (Proposal for a debate)

Part One

The reasons for choosing a particular geographical region

There are many ways to look at the Mediterranean: a sea rich in peoples, traditions, culture and history but also in uninterrupted wars and massacres.

At a time when this geographical area is involved in political games worse perhaps than ever before, it is important to reflect on the social, economic and political conditions that are intermingling and interacting, producing situations of extreme tension but also opening up a vast field of intervention to all revolutionaries. We are sure that this area that belongs to the old world will live through another historic moment in the clash between opposing classes, but in a different and more ferocious way. Acquiring strength and consistency impossible to perceive at the present time, it will certainly not respect the rigid divisions we had got used to through a social doctrine now worn out by time and bad historical experience.

The opposition between the Soviet and American superpowers came to such an abrupt and in some ways unexpected end that we have not been able to focus clearly on the new kinds of problems that are emerging as a result. In the first place the disappearance of the alibi of the global war that was to, and could have, turned the planet into something akin to the end of civilisation and reduced life to that of the caves which man once emerged from with such difficulty. The fact that the conflict was actually more theoretical than practical did not make much difference as it contributed to reducing much real opposition, in particular class opposition, which could have fanned subversive winds of revolutionary renewal everywhere, especially in the advanced capitalist countries. Even when things moved in the direction of a spreading of specific revolutionary nuclei, a reductive dimension destined to lose in the inevitable military confrontation that would have followed, there was always one absolute restraint, that of not upsetting the balance of power too much and finding oneself on the brink of atomic war as had happened at the time of the Cuba crisis. In borrowing party doctrines that had little to do with liberation, the metropolitan revolutionary movements put forward the in some ways quite platonic idea of importing the hotbeds of proletarian resistance typical of the Third World, into the metropoli of Europe. But they also failed to discard an articulate argument concerning the limitations and dangers of subverting the institutions of the main industrial States of advanced capitalism. This was one of the worst restraints ever made on the many attempts that might have gone a different way and drawn great masses of people into prospects of real liberation.

Recent events in Eastern Europe have come about and are still doing so in a dramatic crescendo, but they are failing to show how peoples bearing the consequences of just as dictatorial and repressive regimes as ever will be able to alleviate their suffering. Because that is what it is. Power factions are trying to replace those now out of date at both ideological and practical levels and are using any means whatsoever to do so. In the first place a badly expressed nationalist principle to push peoples against each other in civil wars that are capable of producing nothing but death and desolation.

Unfortunately civil war is an obligatory road which must be passed in any historical moment of profound, radical transformation. It is not civil war in itself that frightens or worries us, but the way it is being used to reach objectives desired by power where people are being instrumentalised and unspeakable sacrifices are being asked of them yet again in order to satisfy power factions fighting between themselves.

We would say civil war is a physiological condition of the social revolution, a kind of child illness that any society in course of formation must pass through. It is a necessary evil, a supreme upheaval within a country which has let loose in order to radically, if not finally, resolve the social discontent that has accumulated over decades. But that is civil war where there is a clash of opposing real interests: those of the dominant class, assisted by its traditions of subservient forces; and the dominated one, strong in its creative capacity and courage. Quite different is the spectacle of civil war facing us now, exactly in the centre of the Mediterranean region in the territories of what was Yugoslavia, where real interests are undoubtedly clashing but which are being suffocated almost everywhere with inconsistent ideological blankets or are being controlled for political or military reasons by groups who have no intention of abandoning their conditions of privilege and domination.

Here the imperialism of the richer countries, in the first place American managerial imperialism, is trying to control the situation by striking any possible liberatory attempts by peoples that could take a different turning and create a hotbed of social demands and revolutionary potential in the middle of Europe. There can be no doubt that new conditions of exploitation will occur in these territories where poverty and economic backwardness are at levels unthinkable in the albeit fictional ease of the self-defined opulence of the West. And this goes not only for ex-Yugoslavia but for all the countries that once belonged to the Soviet empire and have now been given a somewhat stable autonomy or State independence. The whole network of these countries is now being supplied by a precarious economy. In the first place Russia, which requires western and Japanese investments and wants to take off using models that have come to an ignominious end in the capitalist experience. An anything but rose-coloured future, therefore, which could be seen as positive only by those who have lived a life of hardship in the name of a supposed ideal of proletarian revolution. But elementary needs, survival itself, are pressing and combative peoples such as the Albanians, the Croats, the Serbs, Slovaks, Bosnian Muslims, would not now be left with nothing had they not become caught up in the great equivocation of a struggle between different ethnic groups and religions. Hence the interest of managerial imperialism in feeding wars of religion and nationalistic contrasts aimed at controlling the more difficult areas, particularly in the Mediterranean region.

So, the Mediterranean as site of a further development of conflicts of a seemingly nationalistic nature but which are really based on problems of a social, economic, and only in minimal part ethnic kind. And conflict worsening the present tensions, intensifying migratory flows, and producing more unthinkable economic and social hardship will develop in this Mediterranean area over the next few years. It is in this theatre of social clash already in act in some areas, but which could soon become generalised, that anarchists and libertarians who are against any kind of struggle for power or interest in domination and exploitation, should contact each other in order to better co-ordinate resistance against the hegemonic projects in course, and organise the best ways for moving to an attack on these power centres, aimed at guaranteeing acceptable conditions of life, development and progress for everyone.

The condition of the traditional left

Simply ridiculous. The conservative offensive has seen the world Left move backwards almost to the point of disappearing. The number of socialist parties in the Socialist International has grown following recent new memberships, but the real strength of this organisation is absolutely nil. In most cases, leaving aside the "socialist" models in the Middle East because they are incomprehensible to westerners, the aforementioned socialist parties are participating in power, and they are the forces controlling the passage from the old order to the new. The social State is disappearing completely, whereas one of a new kind, run by information technology is rising up which is far more dangerous than the old Reaganism or Thatcherism.

This crisis cannot be explained simply by the collapse of the USSR. That would be too facile. Moreover the left, especially the European left, has never, at least in recent times, had a unity of intent and has always flirted with the more advanced technocratic capitalism. The crisis is therefore more a crisis of ideals than a real one. With the fall of the alibi of Soviet State communism, these parties and their men have been exposed in their task of guaranteeing, directly or indirectly, the smooth functioning of the mechanisms of exploitation and the extraction of the proceeds of capitalism. With this crisis the great idealistic aspirations of the struggles of the traditional left which allowed a vision of equality, the end of exploitation, the liberation of man and the formation of a society where individuals and peoples could live without killing or being killed have disappeared, along with all their contradictions and tactical and strategic mistakes.

In fact the idea of class struggle in the traditional sense, i.e. as interpretation of movements within a strictly economic division of social phenomena, is quite out of date. All political organisations who still insist on dwelling on such mechanistic explanations are destined to extinction, handicapped as they are by their narrow reformist objectives and incapacity to understand that the traditional social fabric no longer exists. The objectives of the mass movements of today are not strictly class ones, that is to say they do not see society divided into classes as their main point of reference. They are presenting themselves - only at superficial level - because the substance of things has not changed, although even this is of some importance - as having a wide social interest, as though power's attack against the weakest part in the class clash really took account of reality as a whole. This has made two elements that seemed to have been long forgotten re-emerge from the mist, which could become the cause of a new and more interesting conflict. On the one hand the individual with his rights, cultural identity and need for liberation against every kind of oppression. On the other, the irrational preoccupation that takes hold of all of us and makes us react in an often absurd way in the face of anything that is different and that justly claims to have its own rights. The reflowering of racism can be explained in this way.

In this new field of struggle where people are mobilising not only in defence of the planet, against world famine and against economic imperialism, but also for struggles based on nationalist sentiments that are being threateningly used by power elites, the role of the traditional left has finally, sadly, faded.

In many ways the model of trade union resistance and the generally corporate model of the past have been swallowed up by the mechanisms of uniformity inherent in information technology capitalism. Post industrial technology has finally gained the upper hand, and, wiping out the ideological talk, it has reduced the role of the left wing organisations, the more or less classic socialist parties, to a new, simplified and sullen one: that of supporting and guaranteeing exploitation and domination.

No going back

We do not consider the choice of the Mediterranean as taking a step backwards, a return to our origins or a search for common roots with other peoples to add together in order to give value to aims that are in themselves limited. On the contrary, we think that

an awareness of one's own historical condition, of one's geographical, political, economic and social placing, are starting points in overcoming the forced fragmentation that a totally information based management of capitalism could hold us in for ever.

It would be impossible to pull ourselves out of the individual isolation we are being forced into by a simple recourse to ineffective (or even useful to the aims of power), rhetorical universalism where man is turned into an unreal ideological entity in the name of which we can become plausible (therefore acceptable) sacrifices to submission.

If we have learned anything from recent years at all, it is that we cannot simply close our eyes and hide social problems under the carpet. At one time one stood up and defined one's own social position - worker, bourgeois, lumpenproletarian - and begin to work out some kind of intervention: one's successes and what one proposed to do in what was considered to be a well anchored social framework. Things are different now. We are no longer clouded by ideology, so feel unsatisfied when we speak of exploitation in purely economic terms. We want to go into the very mechanisms of this complex and difficult process which is not purely economic and could become less and less so in the future. How much instead is it psychological, ethical and even imaginary. The excluded of today, and even more so those of tomorrow, are in the first place individuals. Then they are unwaged workers, or lumpenproletarians at the mercy of the social confusion of the great metropoli. Today pictures of poverty and degradation that the literature of nineteenth century England had made familiar to us are reappearing before our eyes. Epidemics that it was thought belonged to the catalogue of horrors of the past are reappearing with new names. Alcoholism reaps an increasing number of victims, while in one year cancer kills a number of people equal to those killed in all the wars preceding this century.

Social conflict today tends to discriminate less on an economic or class basis, and more on a cultural, then a natural one. The risk run by the excluded of today is not so much that of being exploited, or at least not of just being exploited, so much as being dehumanised, i.e. of being reduced to more or less conscious appendices of machines. Of course, the more this dehumanisation extends the easier it becomes to use the swindle of religious and ethnic wars, and power always has an interest in fuelling such wars in order to break the excluded's resistance, making them ripe for consensus.

In this situation, especially in such an exceptionally varied context as that of the Mediterranean region, it is necessary to underline our differences, not flatten them out with feeble attempts at integration but bring them out and free them from the false distinctions that only serve power.

No micro-communitarian ideology to pull the wool over one's eyes in order to hide the misery that various schematisms are forcing us into and trying to make us accept. No defence of the general at the expense of the particular, or modernity at the cost of tradition. Here we do not mean that specific communities should be safeguarded in the name of their ancient principles that have since disappeared through time due to the levelling process required by advanced capitalism. When these conditions exist they must, to deserve our attention, be a starting point for the subversive side of resistance on the one hand, and for the attack on the other. Any traditionalistic restraint would be nothing more than a further element in the cementing of the new power structure which is building new illusions of communitarian brotherhood on the old model of life.

Not an ideological container

In the same way, we are not proposing a cluster of ideological pigeon holes. We would not know what to do with proposals airing abstract theoretical prejudices divorced from specific present conditions taking into account what can and must be meant by the Mediterranean area of social conflict.

The free circulation of simply the empty shells of old ideologies, (including the respectable pluralist anarchism of the past), would only produce an impression of a revolutionary movement, not a true and really effective one.

That does not mean to say we are trying to lower the ideal content of the struggle in the sense of a circulation of the ideas suggesting the great principles of freedom and equality. On the contrary, it means we want to compete to clarify and put to flight any attempt to upset the revolutionary and transformative capacity of these principles and ideas.

In a world that is witnessing the collapse of the strongest ideologies of the past we cannot abandon ourselves to vague depression or think that we will find solutions to problems by simply trying to escape from the changed conditions of world history. This is what many are doing in the name of a badly construed individualism or with ideas of nature as being something objective when facing some of the great problems of the planet. They are running away from the new difficulties to be encountered when facing the problem of social conflict.

The conflict between rich and poor countries

This in my opinion will be one of the essential elements of the class struggle in the Mediterranean in the near future. All over the world this confrontation could take the place of the one between communism and capitalism that we now consider out of date. But where the latter was a purely formal difference, there being no real difference between planned economy and free market capital, the conflict between rich and poor countries is becoming more and more real. And many of these poor countries, or rather which are effectively poor in the present state of affairs, look on to the Mediterranean. The advanced countries' intent to transfer their capitalist enterprises to these countries was aimed solely at maintaining the unequal growth upon which international exploitation has always been based. Now, in a rapid process of transformation some aspects of the problem of the distribution of wealth could change and fearful, colossal conflicts could develop in the wake of the ethnic or religious fundamentalists.

The arms market constitutes one of the essential points of a traditional politic of exploitation and submission that could change rapidly over the next few years. That would put the more backward States, who have however strengthened militarily over recent decades,

in a condition to declare continual peripheral wars to the extent of their becoming full blown conflicts in the Mediterranean region, which in many ways is still a geographically important area.

This conflict is taking on fundamentalist religious connotations in the area of the Islamic countries. This is a very important development because it corresponds to a questioning of the domination of the socialistic or marxist orientated laities. The Islam distinction between friend and enemy, faithful and unfaithful ("mu'min" and "kafir"), corresponds to the modern one between oppressed and oppressor ("mustad" and "mustakbird"). And it is within the immense theoretical laboratory of militant Islam that disturbing similarities are appearing between civil war and military war, war of peoples to liberate themselves and war of States to impose their own domination. And Muslim fundamentalism finds a good hold where it equates oppressors with the unfaithful, and the latter the most advanced, ie, wealthiest, countries of the West. Poverty has always been short-sighted, and is a bad counsellor.

Like any other form of fundamentalism, the catholic one for example, it is responding to the isolation and suspicion of the rest of the world by considerably stiffening its positions, which is indirectly an effect of the so-called Iranian revolution. In particular there is a mental closure that comes into contrast with the tradition of civility and tolerance peculiar to the Muslim world which, is transforming Islam into a theodicy of dominion, a totalitarian regime. Aspects of daily life are no longer regulated as maxims of virtue, but are regimented as the earthly conditions for obtaining certain favours, when not pure and simple survival.

The possible outcome of this political movement of recuperation in the Muslim countries could be an explosion at mass level and become a movement capable of drawing millions of people into a widespread war of religion. Or an implosion, a regression in the present growth of the same fundamentalism. The geography of present day Islam being almost entirely confined to within the region of the poor countries or to those which even though wealthy from oil resources are still unable to escape the mortgage of American and world managerial imperialism, is such that it could lead to a war of religion and possibly follow itineraries parallel to a real war of social liberation. But these are suppositions that do not always turn out to be close to reality.

The breaking out of irrationality in the sphere of politics

This is happening more and more each day before our very eyes.

First nationalism, the kindling of the great ethnic mosaic of the European part of the ex Soviet empire and the countries of the old world of real socialism. There we see irrational drives serving to light the fuse in what are really economic and social conflicts aimed at domination, but which also contain popular struggles in search of a solution to the most impelling problems of poverty and oppression. Once these drives are let loose it will be difficult to put a brake on them, and they will produce more and more pressing invitations to war and to national liberation struggles where it will no longer be easy to tell where the militarism of States ends and the natural, just need for the liberation of peoples begins.

Secondly, Islamic fundamentalism (indirectly supported by the other religious extremisms who in opposing it make it grow and legitimise it), is bringing an "old style" theological dimension to the modern political world and introducing positions and interpretations that belonged to the museum of horrors of the past. Of this alternative to the lay horrors of the socialist and marxist regimes - some of which do not disdain to present themselves now as true defenders of the believers, confusing the picture more and more - there is little to be said. Things are going from bad to worse.

Then there is the old-style liberal-socialist lay individualism, which is perhaps unable to follow new trends but is certainly able to stir up the drive towards a kind of religion of the ego by sanctifying a human abstraction which a few years ago seemed defeated for ever. It is true that we need to rid ourselves of the schema that have now seen their day, upon which we based our thinking until recently as though we were facing sacrosanct truths. Nobody even mentions analyses now that take as their starting point ridiculous dichotomies such as that between bourgeoisie and proletariat. But not for that should we come to support an abstract, naturalistic kind of humanitarianism. In other words, we cannot speak of the defence of nature, of safeguarding man against the dangers of technology, or resistance against the process of deculturation imposed by the power structure, unless we place all this within a specific social reality. This might vary from the most economically advanced countries to the most backward ones, but it always has one constant: the division of classes between dominators and dominated, between included and excluded.

The impossibility of advanced capitalism

Perhaps the most illuminated capitalists are aware of the hidden volcano gathering momentum at the doors of European well-being even inside their own homes and in the crowded streets lined with shops containing every kind of commodity in the European capitals. But even if this awareness were to extend to the utmost, capitalism would still not be able to resolve the economic problem of the poor countries.

It cannot do so because of the difficulty that nearly all the seven most developed countries of the world find themselves in. Beginning with the United States and including Germany, the latter will, over the next ten years, invest something like a thousand billion marks in the ex Federal Republic aimed at bringing the country, not exactly one of the poorest and in any case not one of the underdeveloped ones, up to Western level. Bearing these proportions in mind, aware that the ex Federal Republic has almost seventeen million inhabitants while the western belt of the ex-Soviet empire alone has almost two hundred million, we can get an idea of the impossible sum that would be required in order to improve the conditions of this economy. Not to mention North Africa and the troubled economies of the Middle East. The problem is consequently unsolvable in economic terms, and will develop along the lines of its natural consequences: an increase

immigration, a further impoverishment of the already poor countries, an increase in ethnic, social and economic conflicts as well as wars and massacres of all kinds.

The end of the second millennium is beginning to resemble the end of the millennium that preceded it.

Provisional conclusion

We think that common problems, both theoretical and organisational, can be faced on common ground.

Points to be gone into in a possible discussion would be the following:

Considering that the economic and social conflict in the Mediterranean area will get worse instead of better;

Considering that the movements, groups and individuals who have the freedom and safeguard of peoples and individuals at heart, and for this reason alone, have some interests in common;

Considering that the tragic failure of the ideologies and organisations of the traditional left is now a fact and no longer just a perspective;

Considering that it is becoming more and more urgent for the realities facing the Mediterranean to give themselves an internationalist organisation;

We propose that all the groups and movements who are interested contact the promoting group indicated below.

Second Part Organisational suggestions

An informal organisation

The Antiauthoritarian Insurrectionalist International is aimed at being an informal organisation.

What do we consider an "informal organisation" to be?

A whole made up of individuals, groups, structures, movements and other more or less stable forms of relationship between people who attempt to enter into contact in order to deepen their reciprocal knowledge.

The first element of any informal organisation is therefore not constituted by the birth of a precise structure with a singling out of particular people or of tasks to be carried out, where there is a division of labour and a delegation of work of co-ordinating, etc. The main element of any informal structure is given by reciprocal knowledge.

The Antiauthoritarian Insurrectionalist International is therefore based on a progressive deepening of reciprocal knowledge among all its adherents. This will undoubtedly be revolutionary knowledge in that it will address itself towards an exchange of information concerning the work that each component, group, structure, etc. is developing in their own reality. To this end all those who adhere to it should send the documentation that they consider necessary to make their activity known, (papers, pamphlets, books, leaflets, posters, etc.) to the promoting group. In exchange they should translate the text of the present document into their own language and send it to all the groups, both national and international, that they are in contact with.

In this way the first informal organisational phase will begin, constituted of the spreading of the present Proposal for a debate.

For the time being this Proposal is being edited by the promoting group and is being published in a special insert in "Anarkiviu".

All organised comrades are therefore requested to contact the promoting group by writing to the address below.

An organisational possibility

Now some idea of what we mean by "organisational possibility".

We think that the Antiauthoritarian Insurrectionalist International should not have a quantitative aim, ie should not simply seek a numerical growth in its adherents. This growth will only come about if the participants find it useful to establish reciprocal contacts for going into, each on the basis of their own personal and political affinity, reciprocal knowledge with a view to working together.

These contacts will, let's say, be the result of the existence of the International, but will not in any way be bound by it. The individual participants will look for their own comrades, starting off from reciprocal knowledge within the international and building their own kind of affinity with them. This could therefore exclude all the others with whom, although belonging to the same organisation, do not feel close because they lack this affinity.

Here the non-quantitative concept of organisation becomes clearer. Not having the characteristics of formal organisations, it does not have growth as its objective, therefore makes no claim to draw into it the whole reality of the struggles in their various national and international expressions as though it were a tiny social laboratory. Instead it intends to limit itself, right from the first moment of its existence, to becoming a point of reference, an occasion for those interested to meet and exchange knowledge and form links of affinity, friendship, affection, not in order to create a wider circle of friends but in order to make the others' experiences available to those who want it in order to widen their own possibilities of struggle, therefore their own revolutionary capacity to act on reality.

A minimal programme

For this reason we are not proposing a platform or detailed programme, we are not suggesting membership procedures or organisational blueprints in order to divide up work and relations between adherents.

We are leaving everyone the maximum freedom to find their own road, to develop their own itinerary in the search for their own comrades with whom to establish more significant agreements and relations, naturally with one main objective: an intensification and improvement in the present conditions of struggle.

For this same reason, there being no basic programme made out in detail, each adherent will not feel obliged to participate in the struggle of another with whom he has not been able, or has not wanted, to deepen reciprocal knowledge with the aim of verifying a mutual affinity. In other words we do not want to build an international party, but a series of international relations, a great occasion for all those who are interested in doing so to be able to develop these relationships to the maximum degree.

Two essential distinctions

We make two essential distinctions, however, which are present moreover in the name of the Antiauthoritarian Insurrectionalist International itself. And that is not because we want to be sectarian and preclude eventual possibilities for some and grant favours to others.

We are doing so because we want to avoid wasting time and do not want to waste other people's time either.

The first distinction is antiauthoritarianism.

We consider that all the revolutionary organisations who choose authoritarian structures internally as a method of relating to each other, and externally as method of struggle, are to varying degrees playing into the hands of the power they are claiming to fight. In the best hypothesis these organisations would end up defeating the ruling power only to put themselves in its place. For this reason we draw a distinction against these organisations from the start, asking all those who recognise themselves in this choice and practice not to contact us. We think that the time has now come to radically refuse the presence of any authoritarian ambitions in the revolutionary struggle. The world is ready for experiences of a different kind.

The second distinction is insurrectionalism.

We consider the form of struggle best suited to the present state of class conflict in practically all situations is the insurrectional one, and this is particularly so in the Mediterranean area. By insurrectional practice we mean the revolutionary activity that intends to take the initiative in the struggle and does not limit itself to waiting or to simple defensive responses to attacks by the structures of power. Insurrectionalists do not subscribe to the quantitative practices typical of waiting, for example organisational projects whose first aim is to grow in numbers before intervening in struggles, and who during this waiting period limit themselves to proselytism and propaganda, or to the sterile as it is innocuous counterinformation that has seen its day. Here again we do not want to discriminate against anyone. We only want to have recourse to instruments that are more congenial to us and which are more suitable to the present conditions of the clash, especially in the area that particularly interests us, that of the Mediterranean.

First organisational steps

As we have already said we are publishing this Proposal for a debate in this special insert of the paper "Anarkiviu".

We are sending the insert along with the paper hosting it to all the comrades and groups, national and international, that we are in contact with.

All those interested, if they agree with the proposal and after having contacted the promoting group, should reproduce this document in their own language if it is other than English or Italian and send it to all the comrades and groups they are in contact with, proposing themselves as point of reference for eventual exchanges of specifications, clarification, documentation and anything else considered necessary. It will be up to them to decide whether to have these groups enter into contact with the promoting group or to manage this relationship directly.

As far as the future aims and development of the Antiauthoritarian Insurrectionalist International are concerned, the two roads do not exclude each other and can go alongside each other.

It is its putting into practice that will show whether this choice of method is capable of bearing fruit or not.

In the not too distant future we hope, the second important organisational moment will be that of calling a first International Antiauthoritarian Insurrectionalist Conference to be held on a date and in a place to be agreed upon, an occasion of great importance for gaining reciprocal knowledge and for exchanging experiences of struggle.

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SARDINIA

(Cont'd from p. 17)

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We reprint the article by the Antiauthoritarian Insurrectionalist International with some trepidation. It reached us in such tiny print that there is a good chance that our efforts to reprint it may be illegible. In addition it is so foreign to the thinking of many of us that it may be unintelligible. As usual we end with a short review or two.

FINANCES:

The unusually healthy condition of DB finances received a slight setback by the need to copy a part of DB61 commercially, which is reflected in the account below. Nevertheless, receipts during the past two months ensure our being able to cover the cost of the bulk mailing fee (\$75) at the end of December.

CONTRIBUTIONS: Ben Perry \$2; Paul Buhle \$5; Earl Gilman \$10; Bill Friesser \$2; Steve Hoyle \$20; Rado Mijanovich \$45; Steve Coleman \$50. Total \$134. Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE	August 24, 1993	\$106.06
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RECEIPTS

Contributions	\$134.00
Subs and sales	<u>112.00</u>
total	\$246.00

DISBURSEMENTS

Additional printing costs	
for DB 61	\$ 16.27
Printing DB62	38.95
Postage	105.00
Postage due	<u>6.94</u>
total	167.16

BALANCE	October 30, 1993	\$184.90
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Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
for the Discussion Bulletin

SHORT REVIEWS

EVERY COOK CAN GOVERN: A STUDY OF DEMOCRACY IN ANCIENT GREECE/ ITS MEANING FOR TODAY by C.L.R. James. The first edition of this pamphlet was published in 1956 by Correspondence, the periodical and group established by the Johnson-Forrest split from the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. James was the "Johnson" part and Raya Dunayevskaya the "Forrest" of an analysis that characterized the USSR as state capitalist. Although the title refers to Lenin's view that "every cook must learn to govern," the essence of the book is an implied rejection of Leninist vanguardism.

James draws on his knowledge of classical Greece to describe the Athens of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., a city-state in which the system of government was direct democracy. Not only was the city governed by the direct democracy of a mass assembly of all free

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Address Correction
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ENGLAND,

citizens from the richest to the poorest that made all decisions on important matters, but the administration was chosen by lot annually from the entire citizenry. Needless to say this wasn't appreciated by the wealthier citizens nor by the intellectuals, neither of whom got the influence and respect they had gotten used to before the Athenian people won this democratic system.

Much of the pamphlet describes the details of this system and how it worked in practice in all aspects of society--including the role of democracy in choosing and producing the dramas for which Athens is famous. James also describes the circumstances that enabled the Athenian people to gain and hold power and create their democratic institutions as well as the less than democratic aspects Athens, the chattel slavery and inferior role of women.

The introduction by--I think--Martin Glaberman comments on the pamphlets relevance for today:

"The answer lies in ending the separation of economic and politics. It involves people taking control of their workplaces, their communities--directly and without mediators. Without bureaucrats, capitalist, and managers standing in the way, it should be possible to build a sense of community, of unity, of cooperation. This will obviously provoke tremendous opposition. Hungarian, French, and Polish workers confronted the economic, political, and military might of their societies. Either we will find the strength and will to do the same or we will sink further into the decay that is now destroying us."

The pamphlet contains a list of three other titles by James. 32 pages including a 7-page introduction; \$2.50 (\$3.00 Canadian) from Bewick Editions, P.O. Box 14140, Detroit, MI 48214.

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